

National Catholic Theater Conference

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

Vol. 1

May 1942

No. 8

"MURDER IN A NUNNERY"

ROSARY COLLEGE, HOST

FORDHAM'S SUMMER SEMINAR

DRAMA AT LORAS COLLEGE

GRAND RAPIDS REPORTS

A WEDDING IN PITTSBURGH

STUDY AT HOME

SAVONAROLA AND THE BLACKFRIARS

OF PLAYS AND PEOPLE YOU KNOW

TO AND FROM HEADQUARTERS

The next year will be an important and difficult one for Catholic Theater. Over and above the real necessity of keeping our organizations alive in the face of diminished staffs and distracting interests, we are challenged by the cry, more urgent than ever now, for entertainment based on Catholic joy and faith.

The summer lull in production schedules gives us time to marshal our forces.

The 1942-43 season will strain our ingenuity. Have we tapped all the possibilities of collaboration with men at neighboring posts? Have we sought out older professional male actors? Are we prepared to make good all-female theater? And especially is our selection of plays satisfying the need of our communities?

Responsibility for the survival of Catholic Theater devolves upon those of us who are left at home. We can insure survival by foresight this summer.

Tel: Circle 7-0236

RULE OF THE FUTURE

Emmet Lavery in a question-answer interview for "The College Spokesman" of Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa, estimated the future of the Catholic Theater in the United States. It will be a "great integrating force in modern life ...not in competition with Broadway, but exchanging the best of what we have with Broadway; ...giving it a new focus ...a new maturity."

"Catholics," he continued, "have one great advantage: they have a sound philosophy of life. But they can't expect to succeed just because of that; in any art form you have to qualify by the rules of that form. Your Catholicity can expand your horizon if you qualify, but it is no guarantee you are per se a good craftsman."

MEN AT WORK

"Attention!" Professionals who mock college theatricals stand at attention. In the last six years the Dramatic Club of Loras College produced seventeen plays, including two world premieres and a giant pageant...it revamped the college stage facilities...played host to two extensive theater conferences. The unstinted praise of Dubuque newspapers attests the quality of the productions.

Radio art did not have to beg for notice at Loras either. An adequate campus studio is in its fifth season and radio drama has been officially added to the curriculum. The present schedule of radio presentations calls for a minimum of seven programs weekly while school is in session.

The Reverend Karl G. Schroeder, present director of the Loras Players, is a member of the Executive Committee of the N.C.T.C., and Reverend James J. Donohue, director of the Loradians, is also a Conference member.

WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

Conference members send heartfelt good wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Boley of the Pittsburgh Catholic Theatre Guild. Mrs. Boley (Mary Clancy) has been one of the most active members of the Conference since its inception.

"MURDER IN A NUNNERY"

Even the hardboiled Hollywood Reporter went overboard on the premiere of "Murder in a Nunnery" when it was produced by The Catholic Theatre Guild of Los Angeles at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre.

This is Emmet Lavery's adaptation of the novel by Eric Shepherd, and Mr. Lavery was also responsible for the staging of the Los Angeles production.

Joseph F. Rice is Supervising Director of the Guild, and the cast included as guest performers Margaret Wycherly, Pedro De Cordoba, John McGuire, and Christine Abbel.

GRAND RAPIDS REPORTS

The Theatre Arts Guild of Grand Rapids, Ella Reep McDuffee, director, crowned its seventh season with a production early this month of Sierra's "The Cradle Song."

The local press praised the production as a sample of perfect ensemble playing, showing sensitive direction. A large audience was equally appreciative.

THE STAGE BETWEEN BOOKENDS

"The Library's Obligation to the Mid Western Theater" is the theme of the 1942 summer meeting of the Theater Library Association on June 23 in Milwaukee.

The scope of the work of this field is suggested in the subjects planned for discussion. These include the service obligation of the libraries to the patrons of the community theater, the professional theater, and the rural theater, as well as the obligations of the college and university library to the theater.

ROSARY COLLEGE, HOST

The committee planning the Mid-West Regional convention next fall met at Rosary College on May 16.

Father Dinneen, Father Schroeder, Sister Mary Peter, Sister Alphonse, Paul Lilly and Charles Costello discussed the pros and cons and concluded by deferring definite plans until mid-summer.

FORDHAM'S SUMMER SEMINAR

A well formulated purpose, an impressive faculty, and theater courses from history to writing and production are the recommendations for the Fordham Summer Seminar of Theater Practice. The Seminar aims to help directors of little theaters, student groups, and teachers of drama, to a deeper knowledge of the traditions of the theater, to a more practical and efficient experience with modern stage methods, and to inspire new ideas.

Rev. Richard F. Grady, S.J., Director of the Seminar, gives Albert McCleery credit for the spade work. When Mr. McCleery joined the armed forces, Father Grady took over the work. To quote him:

"Fordham will offer a rather unique Seminar of Theater Practice this summer from July 6 to August 15. It is unique in that it is a full program designed for directors and teachers of dramatics centered about a course in development of drama -- the purpose being to open up new fields for endeavor to the Catholic drama directors and teachers and at the same time show them how to attain professional standards by economical means, how to adapt their productions to their own theater plants."

Lemuel Ayers, W. J. C. Corington, Helene Pons, Frances Pole Sacco, and Reginald Lawrence with Father Grady comprise the faculty.

Among the guest speakers will be Emmet Lavery, Jo Mielziner, Walter Kerr, Mordecai Gorelik, Jean Rosenthal, Abe Feder, Vincent Price, Judith Evelyn, and Vincent Freedley.

Special features: three theaters at Fordham; each director or teacher enrolled for course may bring with him a student who attends courses without charge and takes part in Acting Company.

If you are interested in further details, we suggest you write to The Registrar, Seminar of Theater Practice, Fordham University, New York, N. Y.

PENTHOUSE AND SHOWBOAT THEATERS

Professor Glenn Hughes, originator of the penthouse theater, again announces his theater laboratory at the University of Washington, Seattle.

BERKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE

The Berkshire Playhouse Drama School begins nine weeks of concentrated work in acting on June 29. The courses include stage deportment, dramatic invention, stage speaking, physical conditioning and make-up. Additional information may be obtained by writing to Mrs. F. Theodore Cloak, Secretary, Berkshire Playhouse Drama School, Stockbridge, Mass.

WOODSTOCK PLAYHOUSE

At the Woodstock Playhouse, Woodstock, New York, Robert Elwyn will resume his summer program of theater production and apprenticeship classes. With him as instructors for basic theater courses will be Mrs. Stella Richard Herlinger, dramatic director for Manhattanville College, N.Y., and Elizabeth Grimball of the New York School of the Theatre.

AT HOME

And if it isn't possible for some of us to leave home for summer theater, we can prepare for better acting, better production, better plays, by individual or group study during the summer months. Here are a few books that will be helpful:

Boleslavsky: Six Lessons in Acting
Milton Smith: Guide to Play Selection
Agnes Young: Stage Costuming
Katherine Ommaney: Stage of School
Fuchs: Stage Lighting
Crocker, Fields and Broomall: Taking the Stage
Victor D'Amica: Theater Art
Corinne Brown: Creative Dramatics in the Lower School

Are you taking advantage of the periodicals in the field: The Players Magazine, published at Peru, Neb.; Theater Arts Monthly, New York; The High School Thespian, Cincinnati ... all these contain valuable suggestions.

Did you know that the American Educational Theater Association (John W. Hulburt, Allegheny College, Meadville, Pa.) has available play lists; also has a committee on contests and festivals whose chairman is F. L. Winship, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

OF PLAYS AND PEOPLE YOU KNOW

The Catholic Theatre of Detroit played to 10,000 people when it ran ten performances of its Passion Play.

Charles Costello successfully produced "Ladies in Retirement" in Davenport, Iowa.

Samuel French is publishing Father Dowsett's "The Betrayal," a Passion Play.

Fordham is still picking up plaudits for its production in Greek of "The Eumenides." Abe Feder, one of Broadway's biggest lighting men, is so enthusiastic over working with Fordham on that production that he is thinking up new projects on which he can help.

Mt. St. Mary's, California is doing Sophocles' "Antigone."

There are rumors of an excellent musical done by Walter Kerr at Catholic University.

Work will begin soon on the screen version of "Keys of the Kingdom." California papers say Charlie Chaplin will produce "Shadow and Substance." Graham Greene, whose "Labyrinthine Way" will be long remembered, is currently seen on the screen in "This Gun for Hire."

After making good on its heavy production schedule, Catholic Theatre of Detroit is now concentrating on U S O entertainment.

Loras College is considering "Angel Street" and "Tobias and the Angel" for summer production.

The Pittsburgh Catholic Theatre Guild closed its season with "Shekels" and both Paramount and Twentieth Century Fox asked to see the Walsh script.

The Catholic Theatre Guild of Los Angeles, host at a production seminar for neighborhood colleges, discussed Charlie Coburn's plan for acting companies from the professional stage as part of the drama departments in state universities.

Mr. Coburn's book also came in for some discussion at the Eastern Public Speaking Convention at New York in April ... exception having been taken to Mr. Coburn's neglect of the importance historically of university theaters. The Shakespearean age followed a period of university and preparatory school drama in England. In our own country the college dramatic groups preceded professionals.

SAVONAROLA AND THE BLACKFRIARS

If you read with interest Father Gillis' syndicated article on the New York Blackfriars' production of "Savonarola," you will also be pleased with Mrs. Christopher Wyatt's appraisal, given in the May issue of the Catholic World.

Mrs. Wyatt says in part, "Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the fifteenth century Dominican, cut at life with steel sharp zeal; his audacity and persistency devoured difficulties and found the same nourishment in obstacles as do the twentieth century Dominicans who founded the Blackfriars' Guild in 1931 to stimulate the production of plays true to the Catholic tradition."

To produce an historical play with a large cast, effective sets and even adequate costumes is a man-size proposition under any circumstances; to accomplish it with a professional cast without salaries or capital is a miracle. In the case of "Savonarola," by Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P., the miracle was achieved by hard work and manual labor on the part of two Dominicans, playwright and manager, who are now letter perfect in the roles of scene builders, stage hands and psychologists. But their audacity and persistency has shown New York a new angle of the Experimental Theatre. "Savonarola" was the culmination of the New York Blackfriars' first season during which they presented two dramas, "Up the Rebels," a Sinn Fein chronicle, and "Song out of Sorrow," the story of Francis Thompson, and a comedy, "The Years Between." "Savonarola," however, was distinctly the climax of endeavor."

TO AND FROM HEADQUARTERS

If your correspondence has not received prompt attention of late, lay it to academic distractions besetting your secretary. She is back at her desk more regularly these evenings now, and promises expeditious handling of inquiries during the summer.

Keep in touch with headquarters, and let us know your plans. At present we look forward to a mid-summer issue of the Production Calendar.

